

TITLE OF THE INVENTION

DIGITAL STILL CAMERA AND USER INSTRUCTION INPUT METHOD

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is based upon and claims the
5 benefit of priority from the prior Japanese Patent
Application No. 2002-265682, filed September 11, 2002,
the entire contents of which are incorporated herein by
reference.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

10 1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a digital still
camera including a touch panel as an input means and
capable of recording/reproducing still and dynamic
images, and a tracing operation of the touch panel.

15 2. Description of the Related Art

In a conventional digital still camera, setting of
a strobe, setting of zoom photography, and operations
concerning reproduction such as forwarding and
enlargement/reduction of an image are carried out by
20 buttons disposed on rear and top surfaces of a camera
main body. When demands for sophistication of
functions and miniaturization of the camera rise, it is
difficult to simultaneously realize these demands.
To realize the sophistication of the functions, it is
25 necessary to dispose many buttons or to deepen a nest
of an operation menu. Furthermore, to realize the
miniaturization, the number of buttons is reduced, and

the nest of the operation menu needs to be further deepened.

However, the increase of the number of buttons is disadvantageous for the miniaturization. The deepening
5 of the nest of the operation menu lowers operability. To solve the problem, instead of increasing the number of mechanical buttons, a digital still camera including a touch panel which is input means has been developed. The touch panel includes a touch detection function,
10 and is disposed in an LCD display section front surface in the camera rear surface. The menu or icon is displayed in the LCD display section, and the function corresponding to the touched menu can be executed.

However, the above-described touch panel simply
15 has the functions of the buttons, and a depth of the nest of the menu at the time of the use of a multifunction is not very different from that in a button operation, and enhancement of the operability can hardly be anticipated.

20 In recent years, a digital still camera capable of recording/reproducing the dynamic image has started to spread. Since the icon displayed on the touch panel plays the same role as that of the button even in the digital still camera using the touch panel, the number
25 of icons is limited. To mount various functions such as slow or frame feed reproduction of dynamic image data on the camera, many icons or buttons are required.

The dynamic image of the digital still camera will be brought into a situation where long-time recording is possible as in MPEG4 in near future. In this case, the demand for the multifunction concerning the dynamic
5 image reproduction is assumed to further rise.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An embodiment of the present invention may provide a digital still camera using a touch panel, in which not only an operation of pressing an icon displayed on the touch panel but also an operation in a "tracing"
10 mode are possible and in which more functions and ease of using the camera by intuitive operability are realized.

According to one aspect of the present invention,
15 there is provided a digital still camera comprising:
a photographing section which converts an optical image into an electric signal; a recording section which records a dynamic image obtained by the photographing section as a dynamic image file in a storage medium;
20 a reproduction section which reproduces the dynamic image recorded by the recording section; a display section which displays the dynamic image reproduced by the reproduction section; a touch panel which is disposed to cover a display surface of the display
25 section and by which a user's instruction is inputted; a detection section which detects a tracing operation by a user on the touch panel; and a control section

which judges a direction and speed of the tracing operation detected by the detection section and which determines a reproduction process in accordance with the direction and speed to control the dynamic image reproduction by the reproduction section.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWING

The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of the specification, illustrate embodiments of the invention, and together with the general description given above and the detailed description of the embodiments given below, serve to explain the principles of the invention.

FIG. 1 is a block diagram showing one example of the constitution of a digital still camera 100 to which the present invention is applied;

FIGS. 2A and 2B show one example of a rear view of the digital still camera in which a touch panel is used;

FIG. 3 is a flowchart showing one embodiment of a touch input process of detecting touch input on the touch panel and executing the corresponding process;

FIG. 4 is a flowchart showing the embodiment of the touch input process of detecting the touch input on the touch panel and executing the corresponding process;

FIG. 5 is a flowchart showing an operation according to a second embodiment;

FIGS. 6A to 6C are diagrams showing a tracing operation according to the second embodiment;

FIGS. 7A and 7B are diagrams showing the tracing operation according to the second embodiment;

5 FIGS. 8A and 8B are diagrams showing the tracing operation according to the second embodiment; and

FIGS. 9A and 9B are diagrams showing the tracing operation according to the second embodiment.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

10 Embodiments of the present invention will be described hereinafter in detail with reference to the drawings.

FIG. 1 is a block diagram showing a constitution example of a digital still camera 100 to which the present invention is applied. A video signal from a solid image pickup device 101 is amplified and filtered by a preprocessing section 102, and thereafter converted to a digital signal by an A/D converter 103. The A/D converted signal is processed by a processing section 104, and recorded as image data in a memory 105. When the photographed image is a dynamic image, the image data is recorded in the memory 105, thereafter compressed by a compression system such as JPEG, and recorded as a dynamic image file in media 107. The media 107 are recording media which are attachable/detachable such as a memory card. For example, the media 107 of 16 MB can be used to

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record/reproduce the dynamic image for about ten minutes.

5 The processing section 104 includes a dynamic image reproduction section 104a which has a plurality of functions for reproducing the dynamic image. In addition to standard reproduction of the dynamic image, the dynamic image reproduction section 104a has reproduction functions such as fast forward/rewind reproduction, slow reproduction/slow reverse reproduction, double-speed reproduction/double-speed reverse reproduction, and frame feed reproduction/reverse frame feed reproduction.

15 A microcomputer 106 includes a ROM 106a in which control programs including a program according to the present invention are stored, and a RAM 106b which is used as an operation area. The microcomputer 106 controls the respective apparatus sections in response to the user's instruction inputted via buttons 109 or touch panel 110. The microcomputer 106 writes the image data stored in the memory 105 into the media 107, outputs the data to an LCD 108 to display the image, or decodes the image data written in the media 107 to display the data in the LCD 108. The microcomputer 106 also controls the dynamic image reproduction section 25 104a to reproduce the dynamic image file stored in the media 107 in various modes such as standard dynamic image reproduction, fast forward reproduction, and slow

reproduction.

FIG. 2 shows plan views each showing one example of a rear surface constitution of the digital still camera 100 shown in FIG. 1. The color LCD 108, touch panel 110, cross key 109a, and mode key 109b are disposed. The touch panel 110 is disposed to cover the entire surface of the LCD 108. When person's fingertips or operation apparatuses such as a tracing pen contact (touch) the touch panel 110, the touch panel 110 can detect a coordinate of a contact portion.

Shown icons are displayed in the touch panel 110. Various functions in the dynamic image reproduction are allotted to the respective icons, and one function is executed in response to the touched icon. When nothing touches the touch panel 110 continuously for a predetermined time, the icon is not displayed. Moreover, when the fingertips touch an arbitrary position on the touch panel 110, the shown icon is displayed again.

In FIG. 2A, reference numeral 10 denotes a reproduction icon, 11 denotes an end icon, 12a denotes a frame feed icon, 12b denotes a reverse frame feed icon, 13 denotes a slide bar, and 14 denotes a cursor. In FIG. 2B, reference numeral 15 denotes a temporary stop icon, 16a denotes a fast forward icon, and 16b denotes a rewind icon.

The slide bar 13 shows one dynamic image file,

and the cursor 14 denotes the present reproduction position. For example, while the dynamic image temporarily stops (see FIG. 2A), the fingertips touch the arbitrary position on the slide bar 13. Then, an
5 image frame (still image) in the dynamic image file corresponding to the contact position is displayed. When the fingertip is brought in contact with the cursor 14 during the temporary stop, and the cursor is traced with the fingertip in a slide bar direction,
10 the frame feed reproduction of the dynamic image is executed. When the fingertip is detached, the screen returns to a temporary stop screen.

At the time of standard reproduction of the dynamic image (see FIG. 2B), when the fingertips
15 contact the arbitrary position on the slide bar 13, the reproduction is restarted from the image frame corresponding to the contact position. The "standard reproduction" indicates that the dynamic image is reproduced at a natural speed. Moreover, when the
20 fingertip is brought into contact with the cursor 14, and the cursor is traced with the fingertip in the slide bar direction at the standard reproduction time, the fast forward/fast return reproduction of the dynamic image is executed. When the fingertip is
25 detached, the screen returns to the standard reproduction screen.

FIGS. 3 and 4 are flowcharts showing one

embodiment of a touch input process of detecting touch input on the touch panel and executing the corresponding process. The digital still camera 100 has modes such as a still image recording mode, still image reproduction mode, dynamic image recording mode, and dynamic image reproduction mode. The present invention relates to the dynamic image reproduction mode.

The dynamic image reproduction mode is a mode in which the finally recorded or reproduced image is a dynamic image, and is automatically set, when a lens cover (not shown) of the digital still camera 100 is closed and the power of the apparatus is turned on. It is to be noted that this dynamic image reproduction mode can also be set by the operation of the mode key 109b.

FIG. 3 shows the touch input process at the standard dynamic image reproduction time.

When the dynamic image is displayed in the LCD 108, if the touch input is started (S101), the microcomputer 106 displays the slide bar 13, cursor 14, and various icons (S102). The microcomputer 106 judges whether or not the panel is touched again after a predetermined short time (S103). When the panel is touched, coordinate (x, y) of the contact portion is acquired (S104).

Next, in step 105, the microcomputer 106 judges based on the coordinate of the contact portion acquired

in the step 104 whether or not the icon is touched (S105). When the icon is not touched, the micro-computer 106 judges whether or not the slide bar 13 is touched (S106). When the slide bar 13 is touched, the
5 cursor 14 is moved to the coordinate position acquired in the step 104, and the dynamic image reproduction is started from the image frame in the dynamic image file corresponding to the coordinate position.

Further in step 108, the microcomputer 106 judges
10 whether or not the touch input continues. When the input continues, and after the input coordinate is acquired (S109), the process returns to the step 107 to move the cursor to the contact position. The dynamic image reproduction is started from the corresponding
15 position in the dynamic image file. When the slide bar is traced with the fingertips (when the cursor 14 is operated) at the time of the standard dynamic image reproduction, the dynamic image is reproduced in such a manner that the image is fast forwarded or returned
20 in response to the direction of the tracing operation.

When the touch panel is not touched in the step 101 (if NO), the microcomputer 106 judges whether or not an untouched period T_n exceeds a predetermined time T_p (S110). When the period exceeds the time, the slide
25 bar 13, cursor 14, and various icons are not displayed (S111). The time T_n for which there is not any touch input exceeds the predetermined time T_p , and then the

icons are not displayed.

When the icon is touched in the step 105, the microcomputer 106 controls the reproduction section 104a to execute the reproduction process corresponding to the touched icon. For example, when the temporary stop icon 15 is touched, the dynamic image displayed in the LCD 108 temporarily stops, and the still image is displayed.

FIG. 4 shows the touch input process in a temporary stop state.

This process is basically the same as that of FIG. 3, but is different in a process at a time when the slide bar is touched. That is, when the slide bar is touched in step 206, the microcomputer 106 moves the cursor 14 to the touched coordinate position, and reproduces an image frame (still image) in the dynamic image file corresponding to the coordinate position. Furthermore, in step 208 the microcomputer 106 judges whether or not the touch input continues. When the input is continued, the input coordinate is acquired (S209), the process returns to step 207, and the cursor is moved to the contact position to reproduce the image frame in the corresponding position in the dynamic image file. When the slide bar is traced with the fingertips in the temporary stop state in this manner, the dynamic image is reproduced in such a manner that the image is frame-fed.

Next, a second embodiment of the present invention will be described. In the present embodiment, various icons, slide bar 13, cursor 14, and the like shown in FIG. 2 are not displayed, and various reproduction
5 functions such as the slow reproduction and frame feed reproduction are executed only by the tracing operation.

FIG. 5 is a flowchart showing the operation according to the present embodiment.

10 When the touch input is started (S301), the microcomputer 106 acquires the coordinate (x, y) of the contact portion (S302). After the predetermined short time, the microcomputer 106 judges whether or not the touch input continues (S303). When the input
15 continues, the microcomputer again acquires the input coordinate (S304). The microcomputer 106 judges whether or not there is a change in the coordinate acquired in the steps 302 and 304 (S305). When there is the change (NO in the step 305), the microcomputer
20 again judges whether or not the touch input continues (S303). When the input continues, the microcomputer acquires the input coordinate again (S304). The coordinate of the touched position is successively recorded in the RAM 106b every predetermined time, as
25 long as there is the change in the acquired coordinate in this manner.

When the fingers are detached from the touch

panel, and the touch input ends (NO in the step 303),
the microcomputer 106 calculates a movement direction
and speed of the contact position based on a plurality
of coordinates acquired as described above (S306), and
executes the reproduction process in accordance with
the calculated movement direction and speed by the
reproduction section 104a (S307). This reproduction
process indicates the fast forward reproduction, slow
reproduction, or standard reproduction of the dynamic
image stored in the media 107.

When there is not any change in the acquired
coordinate value in the step 305, that is, when one
point on the touch panel continues to be touched, the
microcomputer 106 calculates the movement direction and
speed of the contact position based on a plurality of
acquired coordinates (S308), and executes the process
corresponding to the calculated movement direction
and speed (S309). Furthermore, the microcomputer 106
judges whether or not the touch panel continues to be
touched (S310). The reproduction process executed in
the step 309 is maintained, as long as the arbitrary
position of the touch panel continues to be touched.
That is, after the reproduction section 104a starts the
reproduction process in accordance with the direction
and speed, and while the touch operation in the
arbitrary position on the touch panel is detected, the
microcomputer 106 controls the reproduction section

104a so as to continuously execute the reproduction process in accordance with the direction and speed. When the touch input ends (NO in the step 310), the reproduction process executed in the step 309 is
5 canceled, and the standard dynamic image reproduction is carried out.

FIGS. 6 to 9 are diagrams showing the tracing operation according to the present embodiment. These tracing operations show the judgment result of the step
10 306, 308, or 310 of FIG. 5. In FIGS. 6 to 9, a bold solid line indicates a relatively fast tracing operation, and a bold dotted line indicates a relatively slow tracing operation. Here, for example, the word "fast" indicates a speed for crossing the LCD
15 108 to a left end from a right end in one second or less, and "slow" indicates a speed for crossing the LCD in a time longer than one second. The tracing operation shown by an arrow indicates the tracing operation in which the touch input ends (the finger is
20 detached) in a terminal end (tip end) of the arrow. The tracing operation shown by a black circle indicates the touch input which continues in the position of the black circle (the position continues to be touched).

FIG. 6 shows the tracing operation showing the
25 fast forward and rewind. When the touch panel 110 is long and fast traced to the right from the left or to the left from the right (horizontally) by the finger or

operation apparatus (tracing pen) as shown in FIG. 6A, the fast forward/rewind of the dynamic image is executed. Here, "long tracing" indicates that, for example, a distance of 1/2 or more of the total width of the LCD 108 is traced. This fast forward/rewind reproduction is canceled by a tap operation of touching one arbitrary point on the touch panel 110 as shown in FIG. 6C, and the standard dynamic image reproduction is carried out. It is to be noted that when the tap operation is performed during the standard dynamic image reproduction, the image is stopped and the still image is displayed. When the tap operation is performed again during the stop of the image, the stop state is canceled and the standard dynamic image reproduction is carried out.

Moreover, as shown in FIG. 6B, the touch panel 110 is long and fast traced to the right from the left or to the left from the right (horizontally) by the finger or operation apparatus (tracing pen). Thereafter, without detaching the fingers from the touch panel, the pressed state is maintained. Accordingly, the fast forward and rewind of the dynamic image are maintained. When the fingers are detached, the operation is canceled, and the standard dynamic image reproduction is carried out.

FIG. 7 shows the tracing operation showing the slow reproduction and slow reverse reproduction.

When the touch panel is long and slowly traced to the right from the left or to the left from the right (horizontally) by the finger or operation apparatus (tracing pen) as shown in FIG. 7A, the slow reproduction/slow reverse reproduction of the dynamic image is executed. This slow reproduction/slow reverse reproduction is canceled by the above-described tap operation, and the standard dynamic image reproduction is carried out.

Moreover, the touch panel 110 is long and slowly traced to the right from the left or to the left from the right by the finger or operation apparatus (tracing pen) as shown in FIG. 7B. Thereafter, without detaching the fingers from the touch panel, the pressed state is maintained. Accordingly, the slow reproduction/slow reverse reproduction of the dynamic image is maintained. When the fingers are detached, the operation is canceled, and the standard dynamic image reproduction is carried out.

FIG. 8 shows the tracing operation indicating double-speed reproduction and double-speed reverse reproduction. As shown in FIG. 8A, when the touch panel is short and fast traced to the right from the left or to the left from the right (horizontally) by the finger or operation apparatus (tracing pen), the double-speed reproduction/double-speed reverse reproduction of the dynamic image is executed.

Here, "short tracing" indicates that, for example,
a distance shorter than 1/2 of the total width of the
LCD 108 is traced. This double-speed reproduction/
double-speed reverse reproduction is canceled by the
5 above-described tap operation, and the standard dynamic
image reproduction is carried out.

Moreover, the touch panel 110 is short and fast
traced to the right from the left or to the left
from the right by the finger or operation apparatus
10 (tracing pen) as shown in FIG. 8B. Thereafter, without
detaching the fingers from the touch panel, the pressed
state is maintained. Accordingly, the double-speed
reproduction/double-speed reverse reproduction of the
dynamic image is maintained. When the fingers are
15 detached, the operation is canceled, and the standard
dynamic image reproduction is carried out.

FIG. 9 shows the tracing operation indicating
frame feed and frame return. As shown in FIG. 9A, when
the touch panel is short and slowly traced to the right
20 from the left or to the left from the right by the
finger or operation apparatus (tracing pen), the frame
feed/frame return of the dynamic image is executed.
This frame feed/frame return is canceled by the above-
described tap operation, and the standard dynamic image
25 reproduction is carried out.

Moreover, the touch panel 110 is short and
slowly traced to the right from the left or to the left

from the right by the finger or operation apparatus
(tracing pen) as shown in FIG. 9B. Thereafter, without
detaching the fingers from the touch panel, the pressed
state is maintained. Accordingly, the frame feed/frame
5 return of the dynamic image is maintained. When the
fingers are detached, the operation is canceled, and
the standard dynamic image reproduction is carried out.

Additional advantages and modifications will
readily occur to those skilled in the art. Therefore,
10 the invention in its broader aspects is not limited to
the specific details and representative embodiments
shown and described herein. Accordingly, various
modifications may be made without departing from the
spirit or scope of the general invention concept as
15 defined by the appended claims and their equivalents.